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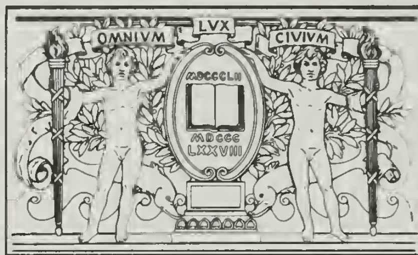

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Brighton

BOSTON 200 NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY SERIES

Henry Adams, the nineteenth
tury philosopher, said that the h
of America is not the history of
few, but the history of the many
people of Boston's neighborhood
accepted the challenge of Adam
statement to produce "people's h
tories" of their own communities
Hundreds of Bostonians formed
mittees in each of fifteen neighbor
of the city, volunteering their tim
the past year and a half to resea
in libraries, search for photograp
produce questionnaires, transcrib
tapes, assist in writing and editin
most important, act as intervie
and subjects of "oral history" rese
These booklets are not traditiona
textbook histories, and we have n
tempted to cull a statistical samp.
We have simply talked with our
neighbors, people who remember
sometimes with fondness, sometim
with regret, but always with wisd
For each of us has his or her own
story to tell, and these stories are
to the development of our neighb
hoods and our city.

© 1975, The Boston 200 Corporat
Boston 200 is the city's official progran
to observe the Bicentennial of the
American Revolution from April 1975
through December 1976.

Kevin H. White, *Mayor*
Katharine D. Kane, *Director*
1 Beacon Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108
617-338-1775

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BRIGHTON

BEEFY BRIGHTON—*home of America's largest stockyards for over a century.*
DELICIOUS BRIGHTON—*center of agricultural discoveries, fertile farmland, and suburban gardens.*
BUSY BRIGHTON—*transportation terminus and trading center of New England.*

Brighton is noted for its natural beauties; its hills and dales, its woods and ponds, its glimpses of the River Charles and distant ocean, all combine to make the place delightful.

J. P. C. WINSHIP, Historical Brighton (1899)

SO it was in 1899, when Brighton was a brawling, bustling beautiful town where flowers and gardens stood hard by bloody slaughterhouses and hotels filled with cowboys and all night poker games. There is a red-blooded American, Carl Sandburg sort of quality to Brighton, whose history has been made by Indians and Yankees, immigrants and bullyboys, universities and apartment developments. Now only the names of the streets and a few half-forgotten old buildings stand to remind the present of the past: Rosegarden and Market streets between them sum up almost all of Brighton's nineteenth century. Winship Street and Gardner Street are mute reminders of the families that made Brighton what it was. The farms are gone, the Abattoir is gone, and the trains just clatter absent-mindedly past H.H. Richardson's Allston Depot now. Yet Brighton, for all its marvelous past, must live for its vital present and promising future.

The Nonantums lived here first—their name means "rejoicing"—a peace-loving and compatible tribe who hunted and fished in what was then wild land. When the white men came, they found the Nonantums valuable allies and trading partners. In 1647, they struck up a compact—the Nonantums received a fee in return for tending the colonist's cattle and Brighton began almost three centuries as a cattle town.

John Eliot, the Apostle to the Indians, brought the Bible to the Nonantums and preached to their sachem, Waban, from the 37th chapter of Ezekiel:

> Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon those slain, that they may live.

The name Waban means "wind," and the sachem took the passage as a message from God directly to him.

Waban was christened and his people followed his example; this was their death warrant. In the Puritan theocracy, religion and the economic system were indivisible. The Puritans believed that their method of village farming, like their theology, came from God and they forced the Indians to copy it, with disastrous results. The Indian could not adapt to the Puritan system; this led to dependence on the white settlers,

FRONT COVER: *Brighton Market and Cattle Fair Hotel, 1853*
INSIDE COVER: *The lobby of the Egyptian Theatre, c.1929*

The Eliot Memorial

which led to the expropriation by the Puritans of Indian lands. In 1675, the Nonantums were forcefully evicted and deported to Deer and Long Islands in Boston Harbor. Eventually, they were released from these colonial internment camps but few returned to their homeland; still, a few Nonantums remained in Brighton into the early 1800's.

Mrs. Agnes Franklin, now in her 90's and a descendant of one of Brighton's first Irish immigrants, remembers her grandfather repeating to her *his* father's stories of the Nonantums who remained in Oak Square when he immigrated to Brighton in the early 1800's:

> The Indians who were in Oak Square when my great grandfather arrived and for some time afterwards were of the Nonantum tribe. They used to be sitting in the Square every afternoon. I don't believe there were a great number of them, but they were there.

No one knows for certain what became of the last Nonantums, but their hunting and fishing ground became the Yankee village of Brighton.

When the white people settled Brighton, they considered it part of Cambridge. So it remained until the mid-eighteenth century, when the area acquired its own church and burying ground and was finally officially recognized as a separate parish in 1779. (The parish was the basic unit of social organization in early Christian New England.)

The first schoolhouse in Brighton was erected in 1722 and several other private and public schools rapidly followed; Brighton, always a leader in education, established the first public kindergarten in America in 1873 as part of the Everett Primary School.

"Little Cambridge," as it was known, made important contributions to the War for Independence, not the least of which was given by the valiant Colonel Thomas Gardner, who distinguished himself at Bunker

The Old Oak Tree, for which Oak Square is named, 1835

The Living Flag, Brighton's 100th Birthday Celebration, 1907

Hill and was mortally wounded there. During the Revolution, the first stockyards were built in Brighton when cattle were gathered from outlying areas to provision George Washington's troops.

When the Revolution ended the people of "Little Cambridge" grew further and further apart from their neighbors across the river. Once they had their own parish, they became socially as well as geographically separated. On February 24th, 1807, the split became official when the town of Brighton—named by its Yankee elders after Brighton, England—was incorporated.

So began the nineteenth century, Brighton's most prodigious period of growth and prosperity, the age of gardens and cattle that left an indelible stamp on the town and its history.

THE GARDEN CITY

Where I lived—in back of Mapleton Street—is what is known as 'the Orchard.' We moved here in 1950 and there were apple, pear, and peach trees, strawberries, blueberries, mulberries, gooseberries, quince. In our yard, we had apple and pear trees. The kids used to raid the pear trees—and those pears were delicious. My mother would preserve them. To this day I can't eat fruit cocktail from a can. And near Brighton Center people had and still have vineyards with grapevines.

Thirty-three year old Jack Whyte's mouth still waters when he thinks of the fruit trees and backyard gardens of his hometown—the last remaining legacy of an era when magnificent gardens flourished throughout Brighton.

Jonathan Winship, a young adventurer/merchant from the third generation of the distinguished Brighton family first introduced cultivated flowers to Brighton. He had traveled to China and had been enthralled by the exotic gardens of Canton. There he studied horticulture until he learned everything the Chinese could teach him. He then set sail for Oregon, where he intended to start what he called "A Garden of Eden on the Pacific."

Captain Winship's plan fizzled in rainy Oregon, and happily for Brighton, he decided to come home and try his luck again. J.P.C. Winship, in *Historical Brighton*, later described what happened next:

The Captain soon after his return home in 1816, to please a favorite niece, made a hotbed opposite the mansion, where Winship Street now is, and raised a few flowers. This interested him and the next year he raised many plants and had a profusion of flowers. He extended it to early vegetables, and after six years his brother Francis joined him. They owned the land extending from Faneuil Street to the Abattoir Grounds and to the present bridge over North Beacon Street on the north side—in all 47 acres. From this small beginning sprang the famous Winship Nurseries.

Along with some other horticulturists, Winship founded the Massachusetts Horticultural Society in 1829. Its members applied the new "scientific method" of experimentation to plants and vegetables, producing many new and successful hybrids. The area became especially well-known for its strawberries, and two residents, the Scott brothers, successfully developed a pair of popular varieties, Scott's Seedling and the Brighton Pine.

The garden and plant business was carried on by many Brighton nurserymen. The most famous were Joseph Breck, who had grounds "for the cultivation of ornamental plants and the production of seeds;" Horace Gray, who in 1840 built the largest grapehouse in the United States; and William Strong, who purchased Gray's estate and became known himself as the country's foremost expert on the cultivation of grapes. All three grew their flowers and fruit on Nonantum Hill above Oak Square.

A visit to Brighton's gardens became a traditional outing for Boston and Roxbury residents, who would arrive in horse and carriage across Roxbury Neck or who, in later days, would take the Worcester train to Brighton for a "ramble in the country." It also became fashionable during the nineteenth century for Boston's elite to ride horseback early on the morning of May Day to Winship Gardens to buy spring bouquets. The Winships had their best business of the year then, selling as many as 500 bouquets.

Shortly before her death last spring, Miss Avis Kingston, a life long Brighton resident and a lady in the true Victorian sense of the word, talked about her father's garden. Looking out the window of her apartment building, which stands on land that once was part of the family's estate, Miss Kingston remembered:

One of the maple trees that father planted still stands. It's in front of the apartment. I don't think it's going to last very long because the roots are almost all visible—the earth has worn away. We had several beautiful flower gardens, one along Bellvista Road which went down along the side toward Woodstock. We had a lot of fruit trees in the backyard and grape vines, and a jungle of blackberry bushes. And later, when they built the apartments across Woodstock from us, the tenants from the apartment used to tell us how

Joseph Breck Catalogue, 1876

much they enjoyed the flowers. We had a big lawn; we used to sit out a great deal. Father planted hundreds of bulbs, little spring flowers all through the grass, and they used to come up beautiful in the spring, the purple and yellow and white crocuses. Of course now it's a parking lot, where our garden was.

Another lifelong resident of Allston, Mrs. Alice Mohan Riley has lived over 70 years in the same house and recalls a pear orchard from her childhood:

The neighborhood in which I live now takes in about five streets and they're about the same as they were when I was a child growing up. Across the street on North Beacon Street, where International Harvester now stands, was a huge slippery rock. And when we were kids, we used to bake potatoes over there. We'd climb those rocks, bake potatoes, slide down the smooth rock into a pear orchard. The pear orchard is gone; the rocks are gone; everything is gone on that side of the street except a little house next door.

Although there are remnants of the orchards in Brighton's backyard gardens, people seem to miss the open spaces that once characterized Brighton. "This was the country, you know," Miss Kingston declared.

Where I was born is now Bellvista Road, all built up with apartment houses, but it really was the country when I was growing up. There were fields from my house up to Summit Avenue, which is most of the way up to Corey Hill. There was only one house between Summit Avenue and the top of Corey Hill, very different from now where it's all built up so in favor of apartment houses. I can remember when there was nothing built on this side of Commonwealth Avenue. From Kelton Street, what used to be Warren Street, down to Harvard Avenue was a wonderful swamp full of beautiful flowers in the spring and little green snakes which the boys used to have a wonderful time killing.

One of those "little boys" was Dr. Roy Stewart, whose home was in the Faneuil area. He talks about his own district during the same period:

My recollection of Faneuil dates back to the turn of the century. Here I grew up in the house at the corner of Brooks and Hobart streets. I received my first schooling at the old Hobart Street School, now long gone. It was really a rural area then. Newton Street, lined with maple trees on each side, was much the same as it is today with its brick houses that were built during the Civil War. There were eight or ten scattered houses on Brooks Street and a few on Bigelow Hill and there were about a dozen houses on what is now Falkland Street and Hobart Street. The rest of the area was open fields. The Gray House at the corner of Bigelow and Brooks streets was built about 1885 and is still occupied. What is now Donnybrook Road, Newcastle Road, and Bothwell Road was

Driving to market, 1852

all water, known as Brooks Pond and was a favorite place for skating and harvesting ice. There were no paved streets or sidewalks, which made muddy going in the spring and dusty in the summer.

Garnett Long, who came to Brighton from Canada in 1924, recalls "a big farm near where Brighton High School and the Fidelis Housing Project are now—Middlemas Farm. I always remember the wide open spaces and the corn and everything else there. It was really beautiful."

Once a champion Allston golfer, Harold B. Stratton, who is now 91, remembers woods and a spring which were once near his home:

There was a big lot of open land between Brighton Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue. There was a spring on Commonwealth Avenue in back, between Quint Avenue and Harvard Avenue. When I just got here I remember a man who used to go around and sell spring water in earthen jugs. And there were gypsies who got their water there.

The springs and brooks were used the year round. According to Miss Kingston:

There was a spring between what is now Bellvista Road and Summit Avenue, about a third of the way up before the hill started. That stream came down to Bellvista Road and when it got pretty near to Bellvista Road, there was quite a pond. It froze every winter and we had a wonderful skating pond.

BOSTON'S WILD WEST

The Brighton stockyards were the community's most important commercial establishment and its lifeblood for over 150 years. As Charles Black, who worked in the stockyards for over 30 years and worked his way to become its president, observes:

"Anyone who grew up in Brighton automatically got a job in either the yards or the Abattoir."

This famous New England livestock trading center began during the Revolutionary War as a means of supplying the Continental Army with fresh provisions, a welcome relief from the usual soldier's fare of salted beef.

It was another Jonathan Winship, the grandfather

View of the Cattle Market at Brighton, 1852

of the sea captain who started Winship Gardens, who secured the Continental Provision contract in 1775. The market flourished throughout the war, and afterwards Winship received a major contract to supply beef for the French fleet when it visited Boston. The cattle trade continued to grow in importance; in 1818 the Massachusetts Agricultural Society established its annual cattle fair, to be held each October in Brighton.

Nathaniel Hawthorne described the scene as it looked in 1840:

> Thursday of every week, which by common consent and custom is the market day, changes the generally quiet village of Brighton into a scene of bustle and excitement.
>
> At early morning the cattle, sheep, etc. are hurried in and soon the morning train from Boston, omnibuses, carriages, and other vehicular mediums bring a throng of drovers, buyers, speculators and spectators; so that by 10 o'clock there are generally gathered as many as two or three hundred vehicles in the area fronting the Cattle Fair Hotel.

With over two million dollars in total yearly sales, the Brighton Cattle Market was known to farmers all over the eastern United States and Canada. It was even reported that the Great Compromiser, Henry Clay, recognized steers in the Brighton pens that had been sent north from his own farm in Kentucky. The traffic in sheep and pigs was also high, averaging for the sheep over 100,000 sold each year.

Business at the always-lively Brighton market increased even more rapidly after 1834, when the railroad began to run through the district. Thousands of farmers, merchants, and salesmen flocked to the town and, since their transactions could not always be accomplished in a day, a thriving hotel business developed in Brighton.

The best-known and most elegant of the Brighton hotels was the same Cattle Fair Hotel mentioned by Hawthorne, an imposing edifice at the corner of Washington and Market streets, where Woolworth's stands today. Built in 1830, it became a legend in its time, attracting bluebloods from Boston, prominent visitors

Advertisement for the Cattle Fair Hotel, 1834

BRIGHTON

CATTLE FAIR HOTEL,

BY ZACHARIAH B. PORTER.

The accommodations of this House are upon the most extensive scale, it has been arranged with particular attention to the ***Traveller and Drover***, both as to comfort and convenience.

Cotillion Parties, Engine Companies, Clubs, and all Associations, provided for at instant notice. The Larder will always be provided with the best the seasons afford, and the Bar, as well as every part of the House, will be attended to with strict reference to the comfort, convenience, and satisfaction of the patrons of this Establishment.

like Daniel Webster and Henry Clay, as well as tourists, cattlemen, and native Brightonians. In 1852 the hotel was considerably enlarged, adding broad running verandas and another story, making the hotel four stories high with a capacity of 100 rooms. It was considered one of the largest and finest hotels in the country. A magnificent hall, running the entire length of the top floor, contained a dance floor constructed of springy wood which helped couples to glide easily and gracefully through their cotillion steps. As many as 400 to 500 people were said to have dined at one time in its banquet room. Festive balls and choice cuisine were as much a part of the Cattle Fair's aura as was the noisy auctioneering of cattle in the yards outside.

The Cattle Fair Hotel was so elegant that it became a honeymoon retreat; young couples came from all over New England to dance in the hotel's grand ballroom and wander through Brighton's gardens. But Brighton's hotels were popular with more rugged types as well. Brighton was the "Wild West" of Boston, and the cowboys and merchants who came to buy and sell cows would often try to cap their business successes with success at the card table, as John McLane remembers:

> The big cattlemen were all pretty good gamblers, too. They used to assemble at Faneuil House and have their poker games up there. Now I didn't see this particular thing, but they were telling me about a game they were having up there one time. Bill Scollins and Jim Hathaway and Munroe were all there, and a large number of cattle fellows from the West. They opened a poker game and Scollins had a pair of deuces. He stood with them and they went around and they chipped in and raised the ante a little more, you know, and then they said, 'How many cards?' Scollins drew three cards and if he don't draw the other two deuces along with the two he had! And deuces were wild! I don't know how much was in the pot there, but them fellows they gambled *big*.

Slaughtering naturally became a profitable business for Brighton property-owners and everybody wanted his share. Before a centralized slaughtering facility, the Abattoir, was built in 1870 there were no zoning laws, and many residents conducted slaughtering operations in their backyards. According to the historian Estelle Wellwood Wait:

> Fifty-odd slaughterhouses dotted the town, zoning laws unheard of. A butcher thought nothing of building and operating his slaughterhouse within full sight of the fine house next door—whose occupant might well be doing the same thing within close range of someone else's house. Such was Brighton, home of cattlemen, before 1869.

In the "Plan of the Town of Brighton, 1866," at least 20 slaughterhouses were shown to be located in the northeasterly part of town, along the Charles River. When the Board of Health requested Dr. Henry G. Clark of Boston to inspect the area, he sounded an ominous note with his first sentence: "You are aware that fears are entertained that the Cholera may appear among us during the coming summer."

As a result of Dr. Clark's investigation, a state law was passed that prohibited further slaughtering within six miles of the State House, except in the new Brighton Abattoir. The era of private slaughtering was at an end. Abattoir is a French word which means "slaughteryard." The name reflects the exalted motivation of its proponents who claimed, to use the language of one enthusiastic witness, "If it will not make slaughtering a fine art, it will at least place it high above its earlier position." But establishment of the Abattoir was still a controversial issue and plans for the facility initially met with fervent opposition from independent butchers in Brighton. An 1870 pamphlet claimed that "three-quarters of the whole number of butchers in Brighton and vicinity declare they will never go into the Abattoir. It would kill off all competition, and drive the butchers out of business."

Eventually, however, the butchers accepted the association. Sixty acres, dry and sandy, on the Charles River—equally accessible to Brighton and Watertown—were purchased, and the work of grading and construction began in 1872 under the sanction of the

Brighton Stockyards, c.1950

Board of Health. The site was bounded by Market Street, Winship Avenue, and a 100-foot frontage on the river. Business began there in 1873.

One businessman who profited from the Brighton slaughteryards was Gustavus Franklin Swift, who began his career at age 16 with 25 dollars in his pocket, a gift from his father. Swift first bought produce at the Brighton market, later arranged for quarters at the stockyard, and eventually became the slaughterer and wholesale supplier to retail markets throughout the area. But Swift became convinced that the future of the meat business was in Chicago and moved his operations there. But the beginning of the great meatpacking company that bears his name was somewhere in the streets of Brighton.

Brighton's livestock trade peaked in the late 1800s; in the following years, refrigerated railroad cars and the rise of Chicago as the meatpacking capital of the United States took their toll. By the time the Abattoir closed in 1957, only 74,000 cattle were being shipped annually, less than one-third the amount that had been processed in 1880.

Today, the land that was the Abattoir is beyond recognition: much of it was sold for an industrial park, while the Leo F. Birmingham Parkway and the Soldiers Field Road extension have replaced what once was the largest stockyard in the United States.

Gone now, the cattle business is nevertheless constantly alive in the memories of Brighton residents. Many local boys got their first jobs in the stockyards. Among them was Andrew Casey, who has lived all his life in Brighton and never moved more than a few blocks from the house in which he was born. Now 72, Mr. Casey recalls:

> My father died when I was ten years old. I had three young sisters and my mother. Times were really tough and the stockyard was our salvation. You could milk a cow for ten cents; and I would bring that milk home, all the milk we needed. My mother made cheese and butter out of it.
>
> In the summertime, there'd be big slabs of ice in the cars which

the pigs would lay over so they wouldn't suffocate. When they'd take them out, I'd take the big slabs of ice home and put them down in our cellar, layers of paper between each layer of ice, and we had ice all summer for nothing.

And I used to make a little money, too. I used to drive herds, open herds of cattle up to the slaughterhouse, 50 cents a drive.

The driving I used to do! In those cattle drives, I used to be the leader and I had to keep the cattle behind me all the time. When one got away, I had to go down to the houses and alleys and get him back to the herd. Now and then, a bull would break away and tear fences down. People would run out and grab their kids and pull baby carriages in. The cops would come around with rifles and put a bullet in him and off he went in the dead wagon—a lot of excitement in Brighton!

In later generations, the cattleyards were no longer as dominant an economic force. They still played a vital part in the growing-up experiences of neighborhood youths, however. Mr. Casey's nephew, Jack Whyte, talks about his own childhood:

On Saturday morning, we'd go down and we'd have to find this herd of pigs, sheep, and cattle. They'd give us maybe a quarter to herd them with a stick. In the afternoon, things quieted down and we'd have milk fights. We'd go into the pens, grab the teats of one cow and squirt each other. I'm not a great milker, but they were so full of milk! Then we'd ride—we were crazy!—we'd get on the backs of the steers and ride them around the pen. And we'd have fights with each other on the steers.

STREETCAR SUBURB

Ironically, while improvements in transportation, such as refrigerator cars, would eventually doom the cattleyards, the excellent railroad system that served Brighton in the nineteenth century was responsible for much of the community's prosperity. As its horticulture and cattle industries developed, Brighton became a transportation center as well.

Before the arrival of streetcars, people traveled to Brighton by road coach or railroad. A stagecoach with two daily runs into Boston was established in 1826 and within the next few decades a horse-drawn omnibus began making hourly trips into the city. The as-yet-unfilled Back Bay separated Brighton from the city at that time, and the route of the omnibus over the Roxbury Neck gave rise to a popular riddle:

"Why is a lady's shawl like the Brighton omnibus?
Because it goes over the neck and back."

The Boston and Worcester Railroad was the first passenger-line train in the United States and Brighton was the first stop on its new route. Historians say a cannon was fired in greeting when the train steamed into the Winship Gardens Depot on its inaugural run in July, 1834. The line carried freight as well, setting special rates for the cattle market and in later years laying down spur tracks that went right into the stockyards and the Abattoir.

The B&W became the Boston and Albany in 1868 and a flurry of station building followed. The Allston Depot on Cambridge and Franklin streets was built the same year. Named after Cambridge artist Washington Allston, the name came to include the surrounding village and its post office.

The Boston and Albany spared little expense on its depots then: in the 1880s, the railroad hired the renowned architect H. H. Richardson's firm to design its stations; in the early 1900s, it commissioned Frederick Law Olmsted to landscape them into "beautiful garden stations." But despite the attractiveness of stations such as the Brighton Station on Market Street and Faneuil Station on Brooks Street, only the Allston Depot itself remains, an architectural landmark now converted to a restaurant.

The Brighton "countryside" took on the appearance of a streetcar suburb toward the end of the nineteenth century, when the trolleys advanced further out from the city's center.

The filling-in of the Back Bay during the 1850s and 1860s ended Brighton's physical isolation from Boston and the town cut the last of its ties with Cambridge,

The Allston Depot, c.1905

decisively shifting its economic dependence to Boston.

Boston's population, fed by successive waves of European immigrants, was mushrooming and the city's overflow began to seek more "living space" in the city's immediate environs. Some of the more prosperous first-and second-generation immigrants found their way to the inviting semi-rural area of Brighton and slowly transformed this cattle and garden area into a suburb. The immigrants and sons of immigrants felt that their prospects for power lay with the politicians of the city where Irish and other European ethnic groups now outnumbered the old Yankee establishment. By the 1860s "annexation fever" was raging in all of Boston's suburbs and Brighton was caught up in the general trend. Although many old-family Brightonians raised fervent objections, the town of Brighton voted, in 1873, to annex itself to the City of Boston. The town became part of Boston in January of 1874.

Soon after annexation, new trolley lines were established, bringing Brighton even closer to Boston. The first trolley line in Boston, which opened on January 1, 1889, ran from the Allston railroad depot to Park Square; the route is now part of the MBTA Green Line. Demand for transportation was heavy and street railway systems proliferated all over the city. Brighton itself at one time was served by many different lines and it was possible to ride from Oak Square to City Point in South Boston without changing cars.

Dr. Stewart still remembers one of the old lines:

There was a one-track carline with turnouts that ran from Waltham to Union Square, Allston, through North Beacon Street and then joined the other carline through Brighton Avenue and Com-

Union Square, c.1905

monwealth Avenue to Park Street. Direct line service was available from Oak Square to Cambridge, Brookline, and Boston. The old carbarns at Oak Square covered acres. In winter and fall, the closed cars were used; in the spring and summer, the open cars were in service. A Sunday afternoon's pastime was to ride on the front seat of an open car and, by knowing how to use transfers, one could ride as far as West Roxbury or Stoneham and back—all for five cents.

As an MTA motorman, Andrew Casey drove the open cars to Norumbega:

We had box cars and you always had to carry a raincoat with you in the open because if rain came up, you had to stay right there and take it. Both the front and sides of the car were open—they were great for summer riding. On a busy summer day at Norumbega Park, people used to come from everywhere; we used to sell roundtrip tickets, 30 cents. There were all kinds of amusements there, merry-go-rounds, dance halls. It was so busy oftentimes there would be a car practically every minute leaving Lake Street. Round trip took an hour.

Charlie Brassil recalls yet another aspect of Brighton as a transportation center:

Most of the people in the late '30s in the North Allston section had at least one member of the family working on the railroad, either as a brakeman or conductor or gandy-dancer or engineer or fire-

Leaving the Brighton Hotel for the Milldam, mid-nineteenth century

man. The North Allston section, from Hano Street to around Farrington Avenue down to the lefthand side of the Turnpike to the Charles River, was kind of a railroad town in itself. It was kind of apart from the other part of Harvard Avenue. The railroad men generally hung around three or four bars around the fire stations; the railroad families were pretty close. That part of Allston was oriented to railroads. Their whole life depended on the railroad in some sense.

THE SPORTING LIFE

There was more to Brighton, of course, than business and industry. There were people and fun, and sport the year 'round. Winters at the end of the nineteenth century were harder than they are now. Gertrude Ellis, who says she "can speak as a third-generation Ellis to live in Brighton," remembers "an extra big blizzard in 1898. It piled the snow high and made a beautiful snow scene of the tall evergreens on the Ricker Place across the street from Grandfather Ellis' house on Oakland Street."

The heavy snows and country atmosphere made turn-of-the-century Brighton a favorite spot for winter sports and outings. Mrs. Agnes Franklin recalls:

We always went skating by Thanksgiving; we had ice enough on the ponds to skate. Bennett Street and Arlington Street were very short streets and at the end of Bennett, which was down back of our house, there was a pond called Bobby Snow's Pond. We used to go there and skate. That, of course, was all done away with and that whole section had been built up.

John J. McLane, who celebrated his 100th birthday in October, 1974, describes Brighton in winter:

No streets were plowed. Whenever you got a snowstorm, why, the streets were tramped down and everybody used runners then for transportation. You'd get a snowstorm probably in the latter part of November—you'd have sleighs for months. They used to have a lot of racing down on Brighton Avenue right opposite the Packard Building before Commonwealth Avenue was put all the way through. They used to start there with their fine teams and sleighs in the wintertime—they all had fancy horses and high steppers. I

"When I was a girl, the Fire Department was all volunteers. We would be sitting in our house on Parsons Street when what was called 'The Bull' sounded the number of the place where the fire was. We'd listen very, very carefully, for we knew every one of the calls. Then my grandfather, my father and my uncle would jump up and pull on their rubber boots and run like the dickens out of the house."

Mrs. Agnes Franklin

Captain McGowan making record speed at Riverside Park, 1865

remember John Shepherd with his big flowing side-whiskers and Tom Lawson, a great fellow in the stock market who had a mustache, a small one. He had a fellow named Kelly as coachman. They'd meet on the nice afternoons and have brushes up and down from the Packard place to Cottage Farm Bridge.

Many of the sleighing parties would start and end at Wilson's Hotel near the present Police Station 14. There the sportsmen and spectators warmed themselves with mulled wine, game suppers, and dancing.

Horses were important for recreation in the country area which was Brighton, not only for sleigh rides but for "rambles" in all seasons. Miss Kingston spoke of how people traveled:

We had driving sleighs and buggies we always used. And we had what was known in Brighton as the 'Kingston Carryall.' It was a two-seated thing with a sort of roof on the top with a fringe 'round the edge. Everybody in Brighton knew the 'Kingston Carryall.'

The Kingston family had a large stable which housed their horses and buggies while most other families used the commercial stables. The names of Marsh's, Keith's, Timmons', and Packard's still bring back days when they boarded horses and furnished hack carriages, the counterpart to today's taxis. But the most famous stable of all was Dan McKinney's sales stable on the corner of Surrey and Market streets, a landmark for over 100 years, where the cry of the auctioneer rang out from 1847 until the stable closed in 1941. Its Wednesday morning auction was an important local event, attracting large crowds. Some came to find a good horse at a good price; others, simply to be entertained. There was another dimension to the popularity of horses in nineteenth century Brighton—horse racing.

By the 1860s, as Horace Gray's grape-house brought Brighton nationwide attention, racing history was being made at Riverside Park, a half-mile track

The late Mr. McVey, known as Mr. Brighton

located at the present site of the Boston & Albany freightyards. The track was later doubled in size and renamed Beacon Park. The late Thomas McVey, known as Mr. Brighton because of his phenomenal memory for local events, once described the scene:

Old Beacon Park had a huge grandstand that held about ten thousand spectators, called fans today. Many of the folks interested in the various events would ride out from Boston in the old horse cars. When the passengers left the cars they were switched off the car track and parked, like autos today, on the side of the road. When the spectators left the racetrack the horse cars were returned to the car tracks and the horse cars and people jingle-belled the way back to Boston.

The last race at the Beacon track was run in the early 1890s and in 1899 a new mecca for racing enthusiasts opened—the Charles River Speedway. Located where the MDC recreation area on Soldiers Field Road is now, the speedway was part of a larger recreation park designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, and boasted a clubhouse for social events and a stable that was described as "a perfect home for the horses in its sanitary and model construction."

The speedway remained a favorite in spite of financial difficulties during the Depression and a fire that destroyed the stable and 40 horses; as late as 1939, two to three thousand spectators crowded the Saturday and holiday matinees.

Brighton's children were among the most enthusiastic of those spectators. As Garnett Long remembers, "There would be an awful mob and the kids used to love it. The kids that were lucky could go over and walk the horses and cool them out. They got maybe a nickel or a dime after the races."

Those same children were gradually weaned from the passing entertainment of the horses to the emerging American art form of movies. They would later recall hours of delight spent in the local movie theaters like Billy Wood's on Market Street or the Odd Fellows Hall in Union Square. "It was thrilling to watch Clara Bow or Rudolph Valentino," senior citizen Eleanor Lynch laughs. "But the best part of the show was when the film broke down. Under the cover of the resulting darkness, you could boo and hiss the management to your heart's content."

The Egyptian Theatre in Brighton Center, the Capitol Theatre and the Allston Theatre—they all had their fans, many of them youths who made a game out of getting in free for an afternoon at the movies. As Charlie Brassil recalls,

The Allston Theatre at that time was 11 cents. And the big thing was to go to the porches in Brookline and look for nickel bottles. If you got two nickel bottles and a penny, you had the 11 cents. And if you had enough courage, you went into the Allston and bought a ticket and you opened the side door to let in all your friends who didn't have 11 cents.

Most of the boys' games were played on sandlots throughout Allston and North Brighton, with football or baseball matches getting underway as soon as

The Egyptian Theatre, a sumptuous movie palace built to show the new "talkies". The theatre cast an exotic spell with its enigmatic Sphinx and its mystic decor. "I loved the Egyptian," sighs one Brighton native, "I used to love to sit on the stage because you could sit on the seat and there'd be no one in front of you. It was just great. I was very disappointed when that went. The ceiling had stars . . . lights flickering."

enough players showed up to make a team. "One of the strongest rivalries for over 25 years," according to 70-year-old Joseph McKenney, "was between the Riverdale, Barry's Corner and Lincoln Street teams."

Garnett Long adds,

We'd go down to Smith's and see the Hopedales play and up to Ringer Playground to watch the Allston Town Team. When we played ball, we used a field near the Abattoir. We called it 'cowflap field' because if a lefthander ran to catch a fly, he was lucky if he didn't step in a cowflap.

The most glamorous sports attraction in Brighton, states Charlie Brassil was the Boston Braves:

At one time most of the Braves players stayed at a hotel at 1277 Commonwealth Avenue. They spent a lot of their off-time down on Harvard Avenue. And a lot of rookies like Earl Torgeson and Rabbit Maranville used to come down to Exide Field and play with us—we got to know a lot of the players.

Golf had its fans, too. Once a caddy at the Allston Golf Club (located where the Boston University Field and the Commonwealth Armory now stand), Harold Stratton tells of "a nine-hole course that started at Malvern Street and then went all the way down to Cottage Farm Bridge along between Commonwealth Avenue and the Railroad tracks."

But swimming was the most popular recreation of all, and the fondest memories are of the "old swimming hole," the Charles River.

"And then to cool off," says Garnett Long:

We used to go swimming in the Charles. We were way ahead of these kids who are streaking today because we used to streak in the Charles River at night. Nobody ever bothered us. It's funny, the things you can remember. This was almost fifty years ago when I was a little boy of four or five years old.

Dr. Roy Stewart also talks fondly of swimming in the Charles, noting the changes in the river:

"The Charles River was tidewater until about 1910. And we had to wait until high tide to go in for a swim. The river was navigable then and tugs pulled lumber and coal barges up as far as Watertown. At low tide it was a muddy basin with just a little brook of water and plenty of odor." The odor that Dr. Stewart remembers came from the discarded wastes of the Brighton stockyards and the Abattoir.

COSMOPOLITAN CROSSROADS

By the 1920s and 1930s, when Charlie Brassil and Garnett Long were young Brighton was an area of mixed national groups, with the Yankees, the Irish, and the Jews predominant.

The Yankees had built the town, developed its businesses and professions, run its government, and created a substantial community. But by the 1860s, the Irish had become a significant minority in Brighton's population. A substantial number of Irish immigrants came to the area in the 1830s shortly after the first failure of the potato crop. A second wave of immigration followed 30 to 40 years later. By 1875, two-thirds of Brighton's foreign-born residents had been born in Ireland.

Most were Catholics and gathered in a small room above Patrick Moley's stable—where the First National Bank on Chestnut Hill Avenue is—to hold services. The parishioners called it "Brighton's Bethlehem." Catherine Cuniff, 86-year-old sacristan of St. Columbkille's, remarks with a smile, "When the preacher would talk extra loud, the horses downstairs would answer him."

By the early 1870s, the Irish population had outgrown not only these humble quarters, but a first and a second church as well. The parishioners bought property on the corner of Market Street and the newly built Arlington Street, with the stipulation in the deed that "no slaughterhouse shall be erected on the granted premises." The church was named St. Columbkille's after the Irish missionary. It became a magnet

for the Boston Irish and was instrumental in changing the area's outlook from Yankee to Irish.

The Irish made their impact, socially as well as politically, on Brighton. One product of the earlier wave of immigration was Michael J. Coyle, Brighton's state representative at the turn of the century. His daughter, Mrs. Agnes Franklin explains:

When my father was in politics, Ward 21 and Ward 22 was all one big ward—Ward 25. John H. Lee was really the head of the thing, but my father ran for representative. And in those days, running for office was quite different from what it is now. He had only Warren Hall to hold a rally in, so he had to go around all over the whole of Brighton and North Brighton and do his stumping on the street corners. And the weather used to be pretty severe at times! He was very popular; he was elected and served two terms in the House of Representatives in the State House, where he was known as the 'Silver-Tongue Orator.' In those days running for office was a very, very strenuous proceeding.

But Brighton was more than just Yankee and Irish. The state census for 1880 shows people from Canada, Scotland, the West Indies, Germany, Russia, and Sweden. As far back as the 1840s, a small number of free blacks were living in Brighton, among them Loquassichub Um, an African woman who was kidnapped from her parents as a young child. She was brought to Jamaica, where she was renamed "Pamelia" and sold to a man named Fitch. Fitch brought her with him on a visit to his mother-in-law in Brighton. The mother-in-law was so appalled at Fitch's maltreatment of the young girl that she bought the woman from him, freeing her immediately. Loquassichub Um married and lived to a very old age in Brighton.

The turn of the century witnessed an influx of Slavic Jews into America. They left their homelands, like the Irish, to avoid persecution. And like the Irish, they came in a double immigration pattern. Two groups of Jews arrived 30 to 40 years apart, originated in different places, and settled at opposite ends of Brighton.

The majority of Brighton's earlier Jewish community consisted of first-generation, Eastern European immigrants who settled close to the Abattoir and the stockyards in North Brighton. Many worked in the large kosher butchering section there; few of their descendants remain in the area.

The second immigration of Jews into Brighton occurred during the 1930s and 1940s as the sons and daughters of earlier immigrants left Roxbury, the North End and the West End. This community was more prosperous, more socially mobile, and generally better-educated than those who had come earlier. They settled in the Cleveland Circle area and built their own kosher shops and synagogues there.

Many Eastern European immigrants, particularly Polish and Lithuanians, settled in Brighton. William B. Bucelewicz, a forty-year old Allston native, active in Boy Scout work, relates:

Lithuanians came to America around 1890 and settled in Brighton because work was available in the Abattoir. They left Lithuania because the men who had not left by their twentieth birthday were inducted into the Czarist army. In 1916 they formed the Lithuanian Cooperative Society which included a meat market. This was the beginning of the Brighton Lithuanian Citizens Club, which is still in existence. There were approximately 300 Lithuanian families living in Brighton for many years, but it is now difficult to determine the number of them because they have been assimilated into the general population.

Brighton's rural atmosphere and proximity to stone quarries attracted many Italian immigrants as well. Many came from the small town of San Donato, in the mountainous Abruzzi district south of Rome. Those who didn't work in quarries or construction found employment at a local silk mill, at the Hood Rubber Plant in Watertown, or on the few remaining small farms.

Aurora and Ideale Salvucci are the children of two San Donato bricklayers who settled in Brighton. Mr. Salvucci, a bricklayer himself, describes Brighton's attraction for his grandfather:

Mr. Salvucci and friends aboard ship to America, 1921

The people in San Donato were all stonemasons—combined with small farming for their own food. My grandfather came here because of the stone work and the quarries in the vicinity. He worked first on the Clinton Dam in 1902 and then came to Brighton—right here in Brighton there were two stone quarries—one was Beatty's Ledge, behind where Kennedy Memorial Hospital is now. He came, also, because of relatives here. My grandfather's brother had come before my grandfather.

The men left their families in Italy and came over here to work. In the wintertime, when they couldn't do any work, they'd go back to Italy, to their hometown, stay there for the winter, and come back again the next spring to work. From 1902 to 1924 my grandfather came to this country nine or ten times to work. In 1921 he went back and brought back my father.

Then in 1924 the U.S. government passed a law that a certain three-month period you could bring your whole family to America, and, if you were a citizen, they could become citizens without going for their papers. So all the Italians went over and got their families.

Aurora Salvucci describes the warm social atmosphere in the Italian neighborhoods of Brighton:

The families knew each other from the old country. They had fraternal organizations, combining insurance with a social club. This gave people security. They'd get together and have picnics and dances as well as meetings, a side benefit of the insurance company. This is how they stayed together. They kept their culture going.

Mr. Salvucci comments:

A lot of young people from San Donato have come to this country since the Second World War. They're still coming over today—and still living in Brighton. Many have come to work for our construction business—for my uncles and my father-in-law and me.

Brighton's population statistics show a variety of ethnic groups in proportions which approximate that of the city as a whole, a unique position in a city characterized by ethnic neighborhoods.

For the last decade, families from ethnic groups new to the area have increased Brighton's diversity.

New and different languages are heard on Brighton's streets. About two thousand Chinese, mainly professional people, have settled in Brighton because of its proximity to a strong Chinese colony in Brookline. Many Chinese families have bought homes here. Men and women who work in Chinatown's service and garment industries are also attracted to Brighton because of its accessibility to the downtown area.

A Spanish Mass at St. Columbkille's indicates the size of the Spanish-speaking community, now approximately 8000. Cubans predominate, with Puerto Ricans and Colombians representing the next largest groups. While there are clusters of Spanish-speaking families in Allston and in the Fidelis Way housing project, Hispanic-Americans, especially Cubans, have dispersed throughout the neighborhood. The Church and social gatherings help maintain their cultural identity.

Joseph Smith, president of the Allston Civic Association, explores the cosmopolitan nature of Brighton:

The immigrants stayed pretty much with their own group. I think right now there is still a tendency for people in my age bracket, which is middle forties, to stay together because we support each other; we find strength in one another. The tendency is to stay with your own group, around a school, a church, a neighborhood, a housing development, a street. I think, slowly, this is beginning to change. I think a lot of the social issues that have been raised force people to get to know each other and understand each other and be more sensitive to each other. And once you get to know someone as a person rather than as a race or color or foreign tongue you get to enjoy them. I think my children will not be as isolated from other ethnic groups as my contemporaries. Hopefully my children and their children will grow up to recognize people as people.

FACING THE FUTURE

Brighton's population today is as varied in its age groups as in its ethnic composition. Until the early sixties Brighton was largely a family oriented residential community. But Brighton's physical location is convenient to three of the area's major colleges. The expanding student population of Boston has brought an influx of student tenants and young working people into Brighton, with corresponding rent increases, housing shortages, parking problems, and youth-oriented businesses.

But Brighton's generation gap, like its ethnic gap, is beginning to close. Joe Smith recognizes an opportunity for community enrichment in cooperation between the various age groups and lifestyles which characterize Brighton today.

Allston-Brighton has changed dramatically. We were a strictly family-oriented community. Now large sections are a community of strangers, people you really don't know that well. The college population, young people in general, moved in and presented at first a tremendous problem for the Allston-Brighton community because of the housing crunch. Some of us who are active in the community feel that this has peaked and that we will have a very healthy mixed population of young people and families and elderly, in a very good working relationship. People need to capitalize on one another's strengths and bridge the gap between the students and the middle-income working family. To some extent that is starting to happen but it will take a little while. Young people have raised some very good community issues—economic issues. Maybe not always in the way that the typical middle-income Allston-Brighton people would raise them, but nevertheless they have raised them. Rent control, for example. Rent control—whether people are for or against it—was fought and won in the Allston-Brighton community and it was fought and won by two groups that were probably the least likely to get together—the elderly group and the 'hippie type' community organizers.

Brighton, like most urban areas, is in a process of intense change and its people recognize that there are important decisions to be made. Tom Malloy, a 24-year-old graduate of St. Columbkille's School and Boston College, tells why he decided to settle in his hometown.

I enjoy being in Brighton; I'd like my kids to be brought up here. I think Brighton right now has got to go one way or the other—it could go commercial or it could become a stable family community. There are a lot of people who have been here quite a

Quilt made by the Senior Citizens of Brighton, 1974, now in the Brighton branch libr

while and own their own homes and want to keep up their neighborhood. When a house burned down here recently, we had a benefit dance and sold 1500 tickets. It seemed like everyone in Brighton was there. It's a great place. You can go down and drink beer in the pubs and meet people who knew your grandfather. There's a continuity to it. There still is, you know.

Joe Smith sums up the past, present and future of Allston-Brighton:

I think that what you are going to see in Allston and Brighton is a community that has had in the past a very rich, vibrant history and is creating a new historical era right now. Barriers are breaking down, little by little. You begin to realize that whatever a person looks like, or what his accent is, you're saying the same thing, his needs are very much the same as your needs. More and more people, young and old, are speaking out and having a lot to say. A lot of us are being re-educated. That's a wonderful sign. When a black kid and an Irish kid and a Greek kid and an Italian kid all tell you the same thing, you sit there and you say, 'who am I?' It makes you look at yourself, which is sometimes good and sometimes bad.

I think that it's going to be a much more open, much happier, and much freer place to live. I think that right now the city and its people are going through an awful lot of tension. If we're willing to keep it all together, I see Allston and Brighton as being probably the best place in the entire city to live. The reason is because of its people. We've got the greatest people in the whole world living in Allston-Brighton. Many, many of the younger generation are staying in Brighton. There's a future to Allston-Brighton. There's a history to Allston and Brighton. If people looked at it, they'd be encouraged. They'd really realize that we don't have it so bad; that, if we learn from our history, we can really do something.

Getting involved in Brighton's history and looking toward Brighton's future, it's worth all the struggles. We're here today, but tomorrow is what counts. There's no place I'd rather live than Allston-Brighton.

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BOSTON enjoys an international reputation as the birthplace of our American Revolution. Today, as the nation celebrates its 200th anniversary, that struggle for freedom again draws attention to Boston. The heritage of Paul Revere, Sam Adams, Faneuil Hall and Bunker Hill still fire our romantic imaginations.

But a heritage is more than a few great names or places—it is a culture, social history and, above all, it is people. Here in Boston, one of our most cherished traditions is a rich and varied neighborhood life. The history of our neighborhood communities is a fascinating and genuinely American story—a story of proud and ancient peoples and customs, preserved and at the same time transformed by the American urban experience.

So to celebrate our nation's birthday we have undertaken to chronicle Boston's neighborhood histories. Compiled largely from the oral accounts of living Bostonians, these histories capture in vivid detail the breadth and depth and depth of our city's complex past. They remind us of the most important component of Boston's heritage—people, which is, after all, what the Bicentennial is all about.

KEVIN H. WHITE